

Prabuddha Bharata

Imso256-2

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वराजिबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

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CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

[VII—Continued from page 22]

[Subjects; Sri Ramakrishna's words about his own Divinity in incarnation.—How difficult it is to believe in Divine incarnation, even seeing is not enough for such believing; it is conditional on Divine grace.—The real nature of this grace and of the fitness to receive it.]

Meanwhile Swamiji returned and asked the disciple, "Do the people in your part of the country know much of Thakur?"

Disciple— Only one man, Nagmahasaya, came, Sir, to Thakur from our part of Bengal; it is from him that many came to hear of him and had their curiosity excited to know more. But that Thakur was the incarnation of God, this the people there have not yet come to know, and some would not believe it even if told so.

Swamiji— Do you think it is an easy matter to believe so? We who had dealings with him physically, we who heard of that fact again and again from his own lips, we who lived and stayed with him for twenty-four hours of the day,—even we have doubts about it coming on us off and on! So what to speak of others!

Disciple— Did Thakur out of his own mouth ever say, Sir, that he was God, the all-perfect Brahman?

Swamiji— Yes, he did so many times. And he said this to all of us. One day when he was staying at the Cossipore garden, his body on the point of falling off for ever, I by the side of his bed was saying in my mind, "Well, now if you can declare that you are God, then only will I believe you are really God Himself." Life in the body had then only two days left to itself. Suddenly in an instant Thakur looked up towards me and said, "He who was Rama, He who was Krishna, verily is He now Ramakrishna in this body. And that not merely in the sense of your Vedanta!" At this I was struck dumb. Even we haven't had yet the perfect faith, after hearing it again and again from

the holy lips of the Lord Himself,—our minds still get disturbed now and then with doubt and despair,—and so, what shall we speak of others being slow to believe? It is indeed very difficult matter to be able to declare and believe a man with a body like ours to be God Himself. We may just go to the length of declaring him to be a 'perfected one,' a 'knower of Brahman.' And it matters nothing, forsooth, whatever you call him or regard him, as,—a *mahāpurusha* (great one) or a knower of Brahman, or the like. But take it from me, never to our earth before came such highest in man attainable as in the case of Thakur! In the utter darkness of the worldly life in this age this great man is like the shining pillar of illumination! And by his light only man will now cross the ocean of *samsāra*!

Disciple— To me it seems, Sir, that true faith comes only after actually seeing or hearing something. Mathur Babu, I have heard, actually saw so many things about Thakur, and thus had that wonderful faith in him.

Swamiji— He who believes not, believes not even after seeing, and premises that it's all hallucination, all dream and so on. The great transfiguration of Krishna, the *Viśvarūpa* (world-form), was seen alike by Duryodhana and by Arjuna. But only Arjuna believed, while Duryodhana took it to be magic! Unless He makes us understand, nothing makes itself stated or understood. Somebody comes to the fullest faith even without seeing or hearing, while somebody else remains plunged in doubt even after watching the play of various powers, say for twelve years, before his very eyes! The secret of it all is—His grace! But then one must persevere that the grace may be received.

Disciple— Is there, Sir, any law of grace?

Swamiji— Both—yes and no.

Disciple— How 's that?

Swamiji— Those who are pure always in body, mind and speech, who have strong

devotion, who discriminate between the real and the unreal who persevere in meditation and contemplation, upon them to be sure the grace of the Lord descends. The Lord, however, is beyond all natural laws,—is not under any rules and regulations,—or just as Thakur used to say, He has the child's nature,—and that's why we find some failing to get any response even after calling on Him for millions of births, while some one else whom we regard as a man of sin or sorrows or disbelief, would have the great vision of Light in a flash! On the latter, the Lord lavishes His grace quite unsolicited! You may argue that this man had good merits stored up from previous life, but the mystery is really difficult to understand. Thakur used to say sometimes, "Do rely on Him; be like the dry leaf* blown up with the gust of every storm" and would again say, "the wind of His grace is always blowing, what you need do is to unfurl your sail."

Disciple— But, sir, this is indeed very hard to do. No reasoning, I see, can stand here.

Swamiji— Ah, the limit of all reasoning and arguing is on this side of the realm of Maya; it lies within the categories of space, time and causation. But He is beyond these categories. We speak of His law, still He is beyond all law. He creates or becomes all that we speak of as laws of nature and yet He is outside of them all. On whom His grace descends, in a moment he goes beyond all law. For this reason there is no condition of grace. It is as His play or sport. All this creation of the universe is like His play—"It is the pure delight of sport, as in the

*The idiomatic expression in Bengali here means the big dry leaf cast off after use as a plate to eat from. It is seen to rise up with the first gust of wind. The man who has all his struggles in life resolved into a settled mood of resignation goes up and down with the course of events and circumstances with perfect unconcern.

case of men" (Vedanta sutras). Is it not possible for Him, who creates and destroys the universe as if in play, to grant salvation by grace to the greatest sinner? But then it is just His pleasure, His play, to get somebody through the practice of spiritual disciplines and somebody else through none of it.

Disciple— Sir, I can't understand?

Swamiji— And you needn't. Only get your mind to cling to Him as far as you can. For then only the great sorcery of the world will break of itself. But then, you

must persevere. You must take off your mind from lust and lucre, must discriminate always between the real and the unreal,— must settle down into the mood of bodilessness with the brooding thought that "I am not this body," and must try to live with the enduring realisation that "I am the all-pervading Atman." This persevering practice is called *purushakara* (self-exertion as distinguished commonly from grace). By such self-exertion will come true reliance on Him, and that is the ultimate of human achievement.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

WITHIN thirty years of the greatest miracle in human achievement comes the greatest war in human history. And it is impossible to deny the connection, for the stream of events in the world is one to true insight. We need go a little deeper into the processes of its life to find that humanity is one.

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Yes, the greatest miracle in human achievement! Every man wants to achieve something, and that is how he lives and grows. But the real lasting value of what a man achieves outwardly lies in what he achieves thereby *inwardly*. This inner achievement is the real point in human effort and progress, otherwise the big outside of our life is in the mass and in the long run unimprovable. It remains or tends to and succeeds in remaining what it always is. It is something to give the human mind its endless exercise, and this exercise counts and nothing else. So we have to step into the inner life of man to see what really human achievement means.

things in the world, and they are human achievements, all of them. But none of them, alas, solves the big old mystery of man's life; they serve to state it in ever-changing terms, they serve to perpetuate it. Which of the profundities of philosophy, the marvels of science or the flights of poesy gives us the great experience to settle the mystery? It seems their only trick is to get the solution postponed by putting the mind in a new pose. So human achievements in this line are not the highest, and they may make for good as well as for evil. The cruellest blood-thirstiness may have its philosophy, its science and its poetry. But man is greater than his philosophy, science or poetry. So he directs and determines their use for his own sake. But the great mystery of life consists in a keen universal quest for the End in Itself, that which cannot be made a means of and that to which we seek all things to be subservient but in vain,—the Fact which closes all our struggles to make things factual for us. Only he achieves truly indeed who achieves something in life towards the discovery of this great mystery.

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Intellect, sentiment and will achieve great

Human achievements of lasting value, therefore, lie in what has been called the realm of the spirit. The remoter you go from this realm, the more it is all the vanity of vanities, and piling products upon products of human effort there carries you none the nearer to the real achievement of our human lives. If life means effort on one hand and easy entanglement in vanities on the other, the real effort of life should be to live beyond the vanities which thicken on us from every side, and religion is the method thereof. The domain of man's religion therefore is the domain of the highest human achievements. Here in this region, all human efforts bear lasting fruit, and in proportion as you achieve here, your achievements in other spheres get their seal of lastingness.

It was in this sphere, three decades and a half ago, that the greatest miracle in human achievement was revealed on earth, for all that man had achieved in religion since the beginning of history came out concentrated and focussed through a single life. It was the greatest upholding of belief that took place in history, for never were the forces of unbelief in human life so ascendant before. And this profound revelation of religion was not for a single race or country. For it spoke in the terms of the whole world-culture in religion. It started with the acceptance of all the great faiths of the world and proceeded to prove in the only way religion can be proved that each of them is true. Such a proof positive of the faiths of mankind was the crying need of the age, and what it really meant to fulfil such a need has yet to be seen with the unfolding of the world-drama for centuries.

We were in the thick of darkness in this modern age of enlightenment. We were turning away from the real sunshine of the spirit to revel in the lamplight of intellect

and science. To us the life on earth became the great thing positive, and the immortality we sought for was the deathless collective life of the human race. Humanity was the cry, the ideal, and nationality was the process, the method. "Live for human life" was the motto; live to enrich, to intensify our life on earth. This was the grounding proposition in the great modern argument of life. This positivism was the basis of the whole outlook. The living thereof is the most positive fact in human life. So live yourself and make others live the life as you find it in human history. Even the "kingdom of heaven" is within you. It is to be ensphered within the life that you live on earth; even so the life of the race may be enriched through the higher experiences of the individual.

This central white flame of the lamplight of modern culture,—this positivism,—shades into darker colours as it mixes with the soot of man's earthly nature. If life between birth and death is the real thing and everything else is to be made a means thereof, the practical question arises as to whose life is the real thing. Comte's abstraction, the intellectual entity we posit behind the process of history taken as a whole, the conception of humanity that is to say, has been universally accepted. But it is a big jump from one's individual life to the universal life of man. And besides intellectual abstraction, other deeper soul-factors are necessary to enable a man truly to take this big jump. It is a spiritual exaltation which none can lay claim to except he who has seen and lived beyond the vanity of this earthly life, he from whom have dropped off all the unreal accidents of birth, race or country, and even of humanity, admitting him into the life absolute beyond birth and death. So positivism truly pursued refutes itself of its own practical necessity.

But if the spiritual uplift does not come,

the practical question asked of positivism as to whose life is the real thing is practically answered in a different way. To all men in the mass their own life is practically the nearest and the most intimate reality. So let us seek to stuff this life we have got between birth and death with all sorts of enrichments. This is the most common application of the positivistic idea. And modern nationalism has knitted the individual to the nation in a relation of mutual reaction, making the good or evil of the one the good or evil of the other. The secularism of the individual appears in an intensified form in the secularism of the nation. The nation becomes the most positive thing, and humanity a mere cry, a good linguistic finish.

So if the only redeeming feature of positivism, its noble idea of humanity, cannot be practically realised without a good deal of spiritual upliftment for which it does not provide, it naturally becomes a very good intellectual sanction for all the blind worldliness of human nature. The extreme positivist faith in the supreme reality of life between birth and death is the root idea of the civilisation that lies bleeding to-day on the battle-fields of Europe. The vanity of this life on earth has been clean forgotten for centuries and the penalty for this forgetfulness has come at last, only, would to God, it proves a real corrective. We forget it so easily that this life on earth is a mere suggestion and not the reality, a means only not an end. The end is to outgrow this life, to reach out to the deeper and broader life in the spirit, where reality is absolute, that is, not broken up as it were into pursuits of means and ends. This mistake of taking the means and appliances of life as the real life itself is at the bottom of the whole mischief working itself up into the tragic fury of the present war.

The real trend of life is to go from outside nature deeper and deeper into the inside. In

fact, we do not really live while on earth, we only seek to live while there. It is not real life so long as what we mean by it may be nullified any moment by death. Now all this seeking to live that we see around us while on earth will proceed best, according to the old experience of the human race, the least we are able to live in the surface-life which consists in wresting life's means from nature and the most we are able to live deep away from this outlying sector of life into real life itself, the life beyond birth and death. "The smallest we live on and the deepest we live for" is the undying motto of human experience. But if this truth is neglected and we are caught up in a frenzy to multiply the means of life for their own sake, these piled-up means will crush us one day. This same story unfolds itself in individual as well as national life. Plain living and high thinking is the one wisdom of the untold centuries, and this wisdom of contentment has been flung to the winds.

The great function of religion has been to sow in the human heart the seeds of this contentment, so that the harvest of peace may come all over the world in plenty. We have seen how the positivist dictum of making the best of life between birth and death let loose the spirit of grab for more and more means of life. Religion declined after this into a poor apology of its former self, till it had to improvise a God for every fighting nation to foment its righteous animosities against another. Practically there has been no tilling of the soil in Europe for the crop of contentment and peace for centuries. With the collapse of the old dogmas wielding authority in the name of religion over small and big areas of collective life, the whole influence of religion fell back on the plane of individual life to inspire stray individuals here and there towards its higher verities. But the big rushing stream of life in every country shook itself free from the obligations of religion in

its feverish plunge towards great worldly ambitions. What was wanting all over the world was a deep spiritualising force to stem this flood of blind secularism.

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This spiritualising force came embodied in Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda was its great diffusing medium in the West. The revelation was commensurate with the world-wide need, for the highest in every religion of the world was tangibly demonstrated, and the unity of religion was established not by any process of intellectual synthesis or sympathy but by the living thereof. It must be from an altitude of godliness never vouchsafed to human sight before that this oneness of religion was lived at the temple of Dakshineswar. The air has been thick with the mere intellectual professions of religious harmony, of an universal religion conceived by great master-minds. But the impulse to world-wide spiritual transformations comes never from theory but from life. Nothing in the province of spirituality propagates itself merely by ideas; here life has to catch fire from life. So in order to reassert itself in a world gone astray, the whole spiritual wisdom of the human race had to be lived, the underlying religious unity had to be lived. And the whole saving Truth was lived in one life,—the greatest miracle of many centuries in human achievement.

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And what a life was it, indeed, to live before the eyes of all men! It beggars and will beggar for ever all descriptions of it appearing in print or through spoken word. The countless spiritual perfections attained in one life, the endless spiritual moods, the depth and variety of ecstasies, the vastness of the power to draw all souls and to save and the solicitude glowing behind it for all men of all the faiths and creeds, the marvellous combination in one personality of all the aspects of spiritual achievement, the mysterious blend in everything spoken or done of the Personal

and the Impersonal, the divine tact of making the loftiest truth accessible to the simplest mind, the immeasurable love, the immeasurable forgiveness, the profound readiness to stand by every human being of whatever clime or creed,—all these immortal facts, facts vital for the great leading towards light and peace for which the very soul of humanity is in longing agony, can be realised only by sincere individual study. So come all men from all quarters of the globe to make your individual study of the greatest Fact of modern history. It is not like advertising one's own wares. A great world-moving power may well be left to itself to create its own outlets and openings. But those who surrender themselves as insignificant instruments succeed only in saving themselves. The great power that has become manifest will use its instruments anywhere and anyway it likes and even these instruments may not know it. So blessed is he who has a glimpse of the tremendous workings of which the war is but a surface-swell and by which the ground is being cleared and prepared for the acceptance by humanity of what came into the world with Sri Ramakrishna.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND KARMA-YOGA.

WHAT! To feel compassion for the poor, the afflicted! Blessed are we that we have the right to worship, to serve!"—The Master was holding forth in this strain in a room where stood among others he who became later on the great Swami Vivekananda; and when he came away from the Master's presence, he said to a brother-disciple, "Oh, I have learnt this day a big, mighty truth, and, if it be given unto me, I shall one day announce it to all." Swami Vivekananda kept his promise, and in all the literature and talk connected with the move-

ment he started in his country, the expression "doing good to others" or "paropakāra" has been superseded by "Seva" or service.

"Work as worship" is an old, old idea in India no doubt. The Gita comes up foremost in our mind when we want to associate scripture with the idea. But in all the sublime injunctions of Sri Krishna to Arjuna, there is one word occurring with the central emphasis which has lost its old real significance to us and which therefore makes it rather difficult for us to see that all that is meant really is work as worship.

यत् करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासियत् ।

यत् तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मदर्पणं ॥

"Whatsoever you do, or eat, or oblate, or give, or practise as your spiritual discipline, offer that, O son of Kunti, to me." This is in a very important sense the one burden of all the discourse on the ideal of work,—*Tat kuruṣwa madarpanam*. Now the most important word to understand in this frequent behest is *arpanam*. The present sense of the word is mere "giving." Supposing Sri Krishna used the word in this general sense of giving, the injunction,—*tat kuruṣwa madarpanam*—loses much of its real force. For we may give with various motives and feelings. Having to give even to the Lord whatever we think or do every moment of our life, we may not possibly give with the right sort of feeling. The whole thing may tend to become mechanical, like the habit of counting beads with a wandering mind. But the real sense in which the word "arpanam" was used by Sri Krishna was more definite, more determinative. It left no room for doubt as to the sort of giving meant by the term. In all Vedic forms of worship, giving or offering formed the central rite. Vedic worship consisted pre-eminently in 'giving' something to the deity. So the term "arpanam" or giving became equivalent to worshipping, to a degree we do not now naturally suspect. In keeping with this old sense of the term, the text

we have quoted has to be rendered thus: "Whatever you do, or eat, or oblate, or give, or practise, make of the same, Oh son of Kunti, a content of your worship to me." Or in other words, whatever you do or think, do and think it as worship unto the Lord.

This great idea of "work as worship" is Karmayoga in a nutshell. The common idea of work as helpful in a spiritual sense is that we should work to do good to all. The great mistake in this idea is that it makes our own conception of good at every step infallible and that it holds ourselves before our mind as creators of good. The idea of doing good to others is bound to suggest this touch of self-pride. The All-Good is self-existent, self-created and all the good possible in the world flows from Him. You and I may act as humble instruments, and how and when even that we may not know. The whole game of the world is being played by the Lord merely for the sake of playing, and He Himself is the central player, the playmates and the play. Over whom can we be placed in this play as the doer of his good? It is the Lord coming to us in the shape of the needy, the poor, the oppressed, the ignorant, the heavy laden. Whatever we do to them, we do to the Lord, and the only attitude proper to us when doing any thing for others is the attitude of worship. *Tat Kuruṣwa madarpanam*; "whatever you give, give it as worship to me."

And from this, the idea expands, till we reach the whole of Karmayoga in the great principle, "Living itself is worshipping." The story is well-known how a puzzled but well-meaning critic once asked Sri Ramakrishna, "How is it that you, who have no other business on earth but to remain absorbed in the bliss divine of highest communion, *you* do concern yourself so much and mix with these young visitors of yours?" The point was significant. It is easy to see how the highest communion of Jnana or Bhakti is good for all, but how can it be equally good for a man

having such communion to come down and live on the plane of Karma? How would such a man prefer at all at any time to have anything to do with other men? This question was pointedly put to Sri Ramakrishna, who took it to the higher spheres of knowledge, for he wanted the answer to be as definite, conclusive and authoritative as possible. The reply that came from the Mother was, "Why, you don't associate with these people as they do associate with one another in the world. You see the Narayana in them and you have dealings only with Narayana."

Here also it is the profound inner attitude of worshipping the Narayana in all which justifies Sri Ramakrishna's dealings with visitors coming to him and justifies his spending his time otherwise than in Samadhi. Here it is practically the communion of Karma-yoga which stands in the place of the communion of the other Yogas. What exactly and how much indeed this communion means is given to a very few to understand fully, for only he who soars up to the deepest communion of Jnana and Bhakti soars up also to that of Karma. It is the one single fact of perfect communion reached through different modes and moods of attainment. It is the same seeing of the Lord either as the all-absorbing consciousness or love or as the all-pervading substance behind the shadows. He who sees in one way is able to see in the other. And he who masters the process of dissolving his ego in Samadhi, has the power also to keep up a game of Karma with some modicum of reality assumed for an ego. What this culminating point of Karmayoga implies, it is impossible to describe or understand.

But Karmayoga as the art of neutralising Karma by Karma is something of everyday concern to everybody. And the fundamental secret of this art is to learn to take every activity of life every moment as an act of worship. Such a practice will not only serve to keep us out of wrong-doing every moment,

but will also bring out a wonderful gracefulness in everything we do or say. It will purify and beautify life, at the same time leading us nearer and nearer to the vision of the ultimate truth of things. The first step is to carry this feeling with us always that in everything we are going to do we are just worshipping our Lord, the Beloved One. For we have nothing else to do in this world, and the fact that we see so many things to do other than the one business of our life is the Maya which exists only to disappear the more we live as if it is not true and only the worshipping is true.

All work is worship. This is the note that comes out and strikes us the strongest perhaps from the lives lived amongst us by Sri Ramakrishna and his chosen exponent. It is only because work is worship that man has the divine right to work, and only the great adept works by divine right who works to worship. All others work to drudge, to slave and to worry out their life. Oh, the humiliation of manipulating transitory things to seek satisfaction for the deathless human soul! The whole experiment the world is bent upon is utterly hopeless. The things as they are, the numberless utilities with which we surround our life, are far too low to bring contentment to the soul, and the more we try to manage by clever and more clever manipulations, the more disgust we brew for ourselves. And if we suppress the disgust by fond hopes, it bursts out in an objective form to prove the vanity of our efforts one day.

But let us work to worship. Let the limbs we work with, the materials we handle, the means we use, the end we seek to bring about,—let all become sacramental and sacred to the one constant purpose of worship. Whenever using means and physical or mental force to bring about something, let us identify the force that goes out of us with the constant self-offering of love, of worship. It is something like the Yogi's meditation done not only with

the mind but also with the self-projection the body. It is the whole man, body, mind and soul, making the self-surrender of love, of worship.

The two instances we have cited above from Sri Ramakrishna's life go to show us how it embodied the perfection of Karma-yoga. The play of his mind constantly energised as it were, from the dynamo of the highest communion remains for us an eternal subject of study and contemplation. Its limitless sweep and depth were wonderful, intensely perceptive and conscious on the ordinary plane of sense and at the same time plumbing all ultimate depths of spiritual realisation; inconceivably keen in the human plane of consciousness, immeasurably deep beyond all records of superconsciousness. "Ramakrishna Paramahansa," said Swami Vivekananda, "was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane who was more active? This is the secret. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it also be as wide as the sky." Many a student and admirer of Sri Ramakrishna's life miss this central secret of his mind. They wonder at its depth but forget that human keenness with which he used to set right anything going wrong even in the minutest particulars of conduct. Nothing could escape his intense perception, and there is nothing to compare with the promptitude and precision in his wonderful grasp of facts. His mind was exact to the shadow of a shade. Now the whole man seems melting away in the deepest God-realisation heard of amongst men, and after a short while you find him examining with one of his boys the washerman's account to trace whether the expenses have been conscientiously incurred. He impersonated not only the art of losing oneself, body, mind and soul, in the bliss of Nirvana but also the no less wonderful art of putting the whole of one's mind into any work, smallest or greatest, that has to be done, so that there is nothing slipshod in the way we do it.

The fullest grasp of every fact in every plane of consciousness and the promptness and precision with which that fact is given its due through the right sort of conduct mark a man out as the ideal Karmayogin. The strength to remain so wide awake and alert for action without the slightest motive of self to distract the spontaneous flow of mental energy bespeaks a high degree of spirituality indeed. The same nature which is seen to rush out in stupendous manifestations of physical energy, in the unimaginable swiftness of shining orbs bolting through space, in the irresistible plunge of the avalanche, in the reckless fury of the storm, in the universal inevitableness of the buddings forth in spring, in the unfailing yearly yield of rain from the clouds,—the same nature waits behind the self-centred energies of man to come out with all its own invincibility in deeds of far-reaching beneficence to man. In the former case, the immensity of nature's power finds itself materialised, while in the case of the Karmayogin the same immensity finds itself spiritualised. Even the vast forces that play in and around the suns, moons, stars and the elements are crippled and cramped by the necessity of providing individualised centres and their poise in space and circumstance. And the same necessity under subtler conditions in human life thwart the full, free play of nature's power. But in the Karmayogin setting up no individualised centre of self behind his actions the whole of nature comes back to her own, so that we see what it is to work with the fullest freedom of nature. And what we call nature here was the great Mother of Sri Ramakrishna, the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna*, the All as well as the Beyond. Sri Ramakrishna's Karmayoga does not close therefore with his span of life on earth, for that life was but the self-announcement of the Mother on earth in terms of our modern spiritual needs, and as those higher needs go on formulating themselves through decisive processes of life and death as in the present

war, the great impulse of work released and embodied as Sri Ramakrishna will find its scope and fruition more and more.

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

CXII.

(Translated from Bengali.)

Victory to the Lord.

Gazipur,
Feb. 1890.

Dear Sir,

I had written a letter to brother G—asking him to stop his wanderings and settle down somewhere and to send me an account of the various Sadhus he came across in Thibet and their ways and customs. I enclose the reply that came from him. Brother K—is having repeated attacks of fever at Rishikesh. I have sent him a wire from this place. So if from the reply I find I am wanted by him, I shall be obliged to start direct for Rishikesh from this place, otherwise I am coming to you in a day or two. Well, you may smile, sir, to see me weaving all this web of Maya,—and that is no doubt the fact. But then there is the chain of iron and there is the chain of gold. Much good comes of the latter, and it drops off by itself when all the good is reaped. The sons of my Master are indeed the great objects of my service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me. Perhaps I shall send brother K—down to Allahabad or somewhere else as convenient. At your feet are laid hundred and one faults of mine,—“I am as thy son, so regulate me who have taken refuge in thee.”*

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

* A quotation from the Gita, with the word “disciple” changed into “son.” II—7.

CXIII.

(Translated from Bengali.)

Victory to the Lord.

Gazipur,
25th Feb. 1890.

Dear Sir,

The lumbago is giving a good deal of trouble, or else I would have already sought to come to you. The mind does not find rest here any longer. It is three days since I came away from Babaji's place, but he enquires of me kindly almost every day. As soon as the loins feel a little better, I bid goodbye to Babaji. Countless greetings to you.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

CXIV.

(Translated from Bengali.)

Victory to the Lord.

Gazipur,
3rd March 1890.

Dear Sir,

Your kind letter comes to hand just now. You know not, sir,—I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedantic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch I give myself away; for try howsoever I may to think only of my own good, I slip off in spite of myself to think of other people's interests. This time it was with a very stern resolve that I set out to pursue my own good, and I had to run off at the news of the illness of a brother at Allahabad. And now comes this news from Rishikesh, and my mind has run off with me there. I have wired to S—, but no reply yet,—a nice place indeed to delay even telegrams so much! The lumbago obstinately refuses to leave me, and the pain is very great. For the last few days, I haven't been able to go to see Pavariji, but out of his kindness, he sends everyday for my report. But now I see the whole matter is inverted in its bear-

ings! While I myself have come a beggar at his door, he turns round and wants to learn of me! This saint perhaps is not yet perfected,—too much of works, vows, observances, and too much of self-concealment. The ocean in its fullness cannot be contained within its shores, I am sure. So it is not good, I have decided, to disturb this man for nothing, and very soon I shall take leave of him to go. No help, you see; Providence has dealt me my death to make me so tender! Babaji does not let me off and Gagan Babu (whom probably you know,—an upright, pious and kind-hearted man) does not let me off. If the wire in reply requires my leaving this place, I go; if not I am coming to you at Benares in a few days. I am not going to let you off,—I must take you to Rishikesh,—no excuses or objections will matter. What are you saying about difficulties there of keeping clean? Lack of water in the hills, or lack of room!! The Tirtha (the place of pilgrimage) and the Sannyasin are the distinguishing peculiarities of the Kaliyuga. Spend money and the owners of temples will fling away the installed god to make you some room, what to speak of resting place! No trouble to face there, I say; the summer heat has set in there now, I believe, though not that degree of it as you find at Benares,—so much the better. Always the nights are quite cool there, from which good sleep is rather a certainty.

Why do you get frightened so much? I stand guarantee that you shall return home safe and that you shall have no trouble anywhere. It is my experience that in this British realm no *fakir* or householder gets into any trouble.

Is it a mere idle fancy of mine that between us there is some connection from previous birth? Just see how one letter from you sweeps away all my resolution, and I bend my steps towards Benares leaving all matter behind!

I have written again to brother G— and have asked him this time to return to the Math. If he comes, he will meet you. How is the climate there at Benares now? By my stay here I have been cured of all other symptoms of malaria, only the pain in the loins makes me frantic; day and night it is aching and chafes me very much, I know not how I shall climb up the hills. I find wonderful endurance in Babaji and that's why I am begging something of him, but no inkling of the mood to give, only receiving and receiving! So I also fly off.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

P. S. To no big person am I going any longer,—

"Remain, O mind, within yourself, go not to anybody else's door; whatever you seek, you shall obtain sitting at your ease, only seek for it in your private chambers. That philosopher's stone is the supreme treasure and He can give whatever you ask for; for countless gems, oh mind, lie strewn about even at the back-door of His abode, He the crest-jewel of my thought." Thus says Ramprosad.

So now the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna never has his peer; nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage. Either he must be the *avatāra* as he himself used to say, or else the ever-perfected divine man, of whom the Vedānta speaks as the free one, though assuming body for the good of humanity. This is my conviction sure and certain,—and the worship of such a divine man has been referred to by Patanjali in the aphorism, "Or the goal may be attained by meditating on the *mahāpurusha*."

Never during his life he refused a single prayer of mine,—millions of offences, has he forgiven me—such great love even my parents

never had for me. There is no poetry, no exaggeration in all this. It is the bare truth and every disciple of his knows it. In time of great danger, great temptation, I have wept in extreme agony with the prayer, "Oh God, do save me," no response has come from anybody; but this wonderful *mahāpurusha* or Avatara or anything else he may be, has come to know of all my affliction through his powers of insight into human hearts and has lifted it off in spite of my desire to the contrary and after getting me brought to his presence. If the soul be deathless and so if he still lives, I pray to him again and again, "Oh, Ramakrishna, Oh lord, Oh the infinite ocean of mercy and the giver of all shelter to me, do graciously fulfil the desires of my great friend, who is a great man, indeed. May He impart to you all good, He whom alone I have found in this world to be like an ocean of unconditioned mercy. Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

Please send a prompt reply.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TANTRAS

BY ARTHUR AVALON.

According to a common notion the word "Tantra" is (to use the language of a fairly well known work) "restricted to the necromantic books of the later Shivaic or Sakti mysticism" (Waddells' Buddhism of Tibet p. 164). As charity covers many sins so "mystic" and "mysticism" are words which cover much ignorance. "Necromancy" too looms unnecessarily large in writers of this school. It is however the fact that Western authors generally so understand the term "Tantra." They are however in error in so doing as explained in a previous article. In this I shortly deal with the significance of the

Tantra Shastra which is of course also misunderstood being generally spoken of as a jumble of "black magic," and "erotic mysticism" cemented together by a ritual which is "meaningless mummary." A large number of persons who talk in this strain have never had a Tantra in their hands and such orientalists as have read some portions of these Scriptures have not generally understood them otherwise they would not have found them to be so "meaningless." The use of this term implies that their context had no meaning to them. Very likely; for to define as they do Mantra as "mystical words," Mudra as "mystical gestures" and Yantra as "mystical diagrams" does not imply knowledge. These erroneous notions as to the nature of the Agama are of course due to the mistaken identification of the whole body of the Scripture with one section of it. Further this last is only known through the abuses to which its dangerous practices as carried out by inferior persons have given rise. It is stated in the Shastra itself in which they are prescribed that the path is full of difficulty and peril and he who fails upon it goes to Hell. That there are those who have so failed and others who have been guilty of evil magic is well known. I am not here concerned with this special ritual or magic but with the practices which govern the life of the vast mass of the Indian people to be found in the Tantras of the Agamas of the different schools which I have mentioned.

In order to understand the significance of the Agama composed of Tantras of varying schools some preliminary observations are necessary. Western writers (and some Indians influenced by their views) regard the Vedanta as a mere metaphysic, that is speculation. They suppose it to be like those philosophical systems of their own which were evolved after orthodox Christianity had ceased to govern thought as it did in the middle ages. Let us picture in our minds for the moment such a philosopher. We think of a man who

has passed through the usual academic curriculum in which he has been taught that previous speculation was a highly meritorious though unsuccessful search for truth. Having obtained his doctor's degree he sets out himself on the same apparently futile quest either in the amiable if foolish belief, that he will discover for the world this treasure or with the less exalted motives supplied by the desire for intellectual amusement, personal fame, or daily bread. In the course of this search it is probable that subscription will be made to the usual moral principles. It is however not generally felt that the moral nature of the philosopher affects the value of his speculation. Good mental endowment and learning are considered sufficient. With this and access to the works of the illustrious seekers of old who are made to supply the instruments of their own destruction the philosopher in his study proceeds to evolve a "system" of his own and to gather round him disciples who remain faithful to their master until a rising sense of their own superiority, ambition, or mere bread and butter prompt them to desert him and to start a "system" of their own. This last holds precarious sway until displaced by another which appears in the course of the unending cycle of speculation. Something is doubtless gained in this process if only it be the discarding of manifest error and the more extensive circulation of philosophical ideas. The mental instrument is also sharpened for the uses to which a true spiritual doctrine will put it. Nothing happens without a purpose.

But according to Hindu notions it is not in this way that truth is found, Tarkâpratishtânât. A deeply read and powerful minded Western friend of mine was not disconcerted by the maxim. He confessed to me that he had no desire to discover the truth as he got so much amusement out of trying to find it. I told him he need be under no apprehensions of losing his pleasure. Hindu philosophy is of a different character and rests on a different

basis. Its counterpart in the West is to be found in the works of the great Mediæval Scholastics of Catholicism. Neither they nor the orthodox Hindu sought by reason and inference to discover truth as if it were something not known. It was already in their possession having been communicated to them by the revealed Word. Their duty was limited to co-ordinating, explaining and (so far as this was possible) making the Word understandable by the reason which also supplied its own grounds for their acceptance. For what is irrational can never be spiritually true. This Word (Shabda) was to the Christian Scholastics the Old and New Testaments and the living voice of the divinely inspired Church holding the deposit of tradition. To the Indian it was Veda and the tradition or Smṛiti which was based on it. Veda is spiritual experience. It is by Veda that the truth is known; it is on Veda that philosophy is based. The Vedānta is not a mere metaphysic in the Western sense as even Professor Deussen who so highly appreciates it takes it to be. He asks the people of India to adhere to it. But why should they do so if it be a mere speculation? Why should they accept it rather than any other, for he does not accept the possibility of Yoga which verifies the doctrine.

Some Western writers are of opinion that the Tantra Śāstra was, at least in its origin, alien and indeed hostile to the Veda. One of them has said "We are strongly of opinion that in their essence the two principles are fundamentally opposed and that the Tantra only uses Vedic forms to mask its essential opposition." I will not argue this question now. It is however the fact now as it has been for centuries past that the Agamavādins base their doctrine on Veda. The Vedānta is the final authority and basis for the doctrines set forth in the Tantras though the latter interpret the Vedānta in various ways. The real meaning of Vedānta is Upanishad and nothing else. Many persons however speak

of Vedanta as though it meant the philosophy of Shankara or whatever other philosopher they follow. This of course is incorrect. Vedanta is Shruti. Shankara's philosophy is merely one interpretation of Shruti just as Ramanuja's is another and that of the Shaivagama is a third. There is no question of competition between Vedanta as Shruti and Tantra Shastra. It is however the fact that each of the followers of the different schools of Agama contend that their interpretation of the Shruti texts is the true one and superior to that of other schools. I have thus found a dislike of Shankara's Mayavada amongst Sadhakas of the Northern Shaiva and Shakta Schools which more nearly approach Shankara's standpoint than the Shaivasiddhanta and Pancharatra which as is well known dispute the truth of Shankara's interpretation of Shruti. I am not here concerned to show that one system is better than the other. Each will adopt that which most suits him. I am only stating the fact. As the Ahirbudhnya Samhita of the Pancharatra Agama says, the aspects of God are infinite and no philosopher can seize and duly express more than one aspect. This is perfectly true. All systems of interpretation have some merits as they have defects, that of Shankara included. The latter by his Mayavada is able to preserve more completely than any other interpretation the changelessness and stainlessness of Brahman. It does this however at the cost of certain defects which do not exist in other schools which have also their own peculiar merits and shortcomings. The basis and seat of authority is Shruti or experience; and the Agama interprets Shruti in its own way. Thus the Shaiva-Shakta doctrine is a specific interpretation of Vedanta which differs in several respects from that of Shankara though it agrees (I speak of the Northern Shaiva School) with him on the fundamental question of the unity of Jivatma and Paramatma and is therefore Advaita. Agama then is one interpretation of Vedanta; an interpre-

tation doubtless influenced by the practical ends which this Shastra has in view. From the highest standpoint all schools may be reconciled.

The next question is how Vedantic experience of which the Agama speaks may be gained? This is also prescribed in the Shastra in the form of particular Sadhanas. In the first place there must be a healthy physical and moral life. To know a thing in its ultimate sense is to *be* that thing. To know Brahman is to *be* Brahman. One cannot realise Brahman the Pure except by being oneself pure (Suddha chitta). But to attain and keep this state as well as for progress therein certain specific means, practice, rituals or disciplines are necessary. The result cannot be got by mere philosophical talk about Brahman. Religion is a practical activity. Just as the body requires exercise, training and gymnastic so does the mind. This may be of a merely intellectual or spiritual kind. The means employed are called Sadhana which comes from the root "sadh" to exert. Sadhana is that which leads to Siddhi. Sadhana is the development of Shakti. Man is consciousness (Atma) vehicled by Shakti in the form of mind and body. But this Shakti is at base consciousness just as Atma is; for Atma and Shakti are one. Man is thus a vast magazine of both latent and expressed power. The object of Sadhana is to develop man's Shakti whether for temporal or spiritual purposes. But where is this Sadhana to be found? Seeing that the Vaidik Achara has fallen into practical desuetude we can find it nowhere but in the Agamas and in the Puranas which are replete with Tantrik rituals. The Tantras of these Agamas therefore contain both a practical exposition of spiritual doctrine and of the means by which the truth it teaches may be realised. Their authority does not depend as Western writers and some of their Eastern followers suppose on the date when they were revealed but on the question whether Siddhi

is gained thereby. This too is the proof of Ayurveda. The test of medicine is that it cures. If Siddhi is not obtained the fact that it is written "Shiva uvācha" or the like counts for nothing. The Agama therefore is a practical exposition and application of Vedānta varying according to its different schools.

The latest tendency in modern Western philosophy is to rest upon intuition as it was formerly the tendency to glorify dialectic. Intuition has however to be laid into higher and higher possibilities by means of Sadhana. "This term means work or practice which in its result is the gradual unfolding of the Spirit's vast latent magazine of power (Shakti), enjoyment and vision which everyone possesses in himself. The philosophy of the Agama is, as a friend of mine very well put it, a practical philosophy, adding, that what the intellectual world wants today is this sort of philosophy, a philosophy which not merely *argues* but *experiments*. The form which Sadhana takes is a secondary matter. One goal may be reached by many paths. What is the path in any particular case depends on considerations of personal capacity and temperament, race and faith. For the Hindu there is the Agama which contains forms of discipline which his race has evolved and are therefore primarily suitable for him. This is not to say that these forms are unalterable. Others will adopt other forms of Sadhana suitable to them. Thus the Catholic Church prescribes a full and powerful Sadhana in its sacraments (Sangskara) and worship (Puja, Upasana), meditation (Dhyana), rosary (Japa) and the like. But any system to be fruitful must experiment to gain experience. The significance of the Taptra Shastra lies in this that it claims to afford a means available to all, of whatever caste and of either sex, whereby the truths taught by Vedānta may be practically realised.

A. A.

THE MEMORIAL TO GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL AND THE REPLY.

To

His Excellency the Right Honourable
Thomas David Baron Carmichael
of Skirling G. C. I. E., K. C. M. G.,
Governor of Bengal in Council.

THE HUMBLE MEMORIAL OF
THE GOVERNING BODY OF
THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION,
BELUR, DISTRICT HOWRAH,

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH,

(1) That Your Excellency's memorialists as heads of the Ramkrishna Mission approach Your Excellency with this memorial and crave leave to recall Your Excellency's reference to the Mission in Your Excellency's Durbar address of the 11th December last—since this reference has come to receive interpretations, in some quarters at least, which are certainly not intended in Your Excellency's words, but are already having for the Mission seriously unfortunate consequences—not simply in the withdrawal of support, which was formerly cordially given, but in the diffusion of a distrust and even positive misunderstanding of the whole organisation, character and purpose which cannot but have disastrous results for the work of the Mission and consequently for the people it serves, the poor of its charities and the sick of its hospitals.

(2) Your Excellency's memorialists have very heartily appreciated the honour done to them by Your Excellency in selecting this Mission as the very type of societies for the charitable ends, and the social service, which Your Excellency so generously and heartily approves; and they feel encouraged to further efforts to retain and be worthy of the pre-eminent distinction thus given to them, and this not only throughout what remains of Your Excellency's own Governorship, but that of Your Excellency's successors.

(3) As the very first of these efforts, Your Excellency's memorialists have taken to heart the

warning given in Your Excellency's address. Your Excellency's memorialists have accordingly gone over the entire list of membership throughout India, which consists of 78 monastic, 121 lay and 2 associate members only and they are happy to place before Your Excellency the details and the results of their investigation. To the best and utmost of their knowledge and belief this enquiry has yielded not a single name of any individual who has been in any way connected with crime or with conspiracy, with revolutionary purpose, or even with unconstitutional agitation.

(4) Your Excellency's memorialists do not hesitate to explain that like many other monastic orders including many of the Christian faith, and these not the least actuated by the tradition and spirit of their Master, they should hesitate to refuse from their novitiate, though that is to their belief at present blameless, a man whose past life in the world may have been blameworthy; but like these orders, the acceptance of such novices would be for the purpose, and with the discipline, of weaning such men from their former courses, and leading them from the points of view these express, to that new and inward life of religion which is the ideal of the Mission, and to that active discipline of social service which is its daily and its exclusive practical aim.

(5) Your Excellency however goes on to say—and here are the passages which have given rise to that difficult situation, above mentioned, with many of the old supporters and friends of the Mission—*viz.*, that they (the recruiters of the criminal movement) “often seize the opportunity which membership in a charitable society, like the Ramkrishna Mission or participation in the relief of distress, gives them to meet and influence the boys who have noble ideas, but who have not enough experience to judge where a particular course must lead”—and further, “that mean and cruel men do join these societies in order to corrupt the minds of young men who would, if only they were not interfered with, be benefactors to their fellow-countrymen.”

(6) Your Excellency's memorialists must of course leave other societies each to enquire and speak for itself; but they are relieved to be able to assure Your Excellency, and to offer the docu-

mentary evidence of their records, which are carefully and even strictly kept, that investigation of their membership, which at present amounts to 201 members only, is to the best of their knowledge and belief, free from such elements.

(7) Your Excellency's memorialists beg to submit for Your Excellency's perusal copies of the Rules and Regulations of the Mission promulgated and printed so far back as 1909 (appended hereto and marked *A & B*) and owing to the strict policy pursued in enlisting its members, the members admitted during the last 19 years since its foundation (as per page 1 of the First General Report of the Mission, marked *C*) has grown more slowly than in the case of other similar institutions in the country and hence it cannot be said that political conspirators have seized the opportunity which membership in the Mission may give them to corrupt the minds of youngmen.

(8) Your Excellency's memorialists crave leave to mention the connection of the revered name of Sree Ramkrishna Dev, who is considered as a saint not only by his followers in this country and elsewhere, but by recognised European *savants* like Prof. Max-Muller and Mr. William James of America, the Gifford lecturer on Natural Religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901 and 1902, with several independent and different religious and philanthropic societies having absolutely no connection whatever with the Ramkrishna Mission—but the similarity of the names of which is apt to confuse the Ramkrishna Mission with one or other of them as if they are parts of the same organisation; whereas the Ramkrishna Mission in fact has nothing to do with the aforesaid bodies or societies bearing the name of Sree Ramkrishna. In the town of Calcutta there are several such societies, some of which, like the Ramkrishna Ananthbhandar Society at Bowbazar, derive much of their influence and prestige owing to the official patronage they receive in the shape of monetary help from the Government, the Calcutta Corporation etc., and their annual meetings are presided over by such high officials like the Hon'ble Mr. P. C. Lyons C. S. I., the Hon'ble Mr. C. F. Payne, Sir Lawrence Jenkins and others—and a large body of men confuse such societies with the Mission. With regard to the Ramkrishna Mission itself, the help of outsiders having sympathy with the work of the Mis-

sion is taken in occasional large philanthropic works *e. g.*, famine-relief, flood-relief *etc.*,—such co-operation being limited to the period reliefs are actually given and those workers have no manner of control over the Mission itself. These men are very carefully selected by Your Excellency's memorialists and by way of further precaution and safety Your Excellency's memorialists have decided to get a declaration in the annexed form (marked *D*) to be duly signed in future from all those who would come to help the Mission in its philanthropic works. If a few of these outside workers are looked upon as suspicious characters by the Police—no blame can be attached to the Ramkrishna Mission itself.

(9) That Your Excellency's humble memorialists further beg leave to point out that the opportunity which, according to Your Excellency's opinion, membership in a philanthropic body like the Ramkrishna Mission gives to political conspirators, "to meet and to influence boys who have noble ideas but who have not enough experience to judge where a particular course may lead," happens to be very much limited in the case of the Ramkrishna Mission owing to such circumstances and safe-guards as (*a*) the avowed exclusion of every political propaganda from the aims and objects of the Mission, its public manifesto under the heading "A warning to the public" printed in various newspapers in April 1914 after consultation with such a high and responsible police officer as Mr. C. A. Tegart M.V.O., C.I.E., a copy of which is enclosed (marked *E*) being noteworthy in this connection, besides, the views publicly discussed in its periodical organs and teachings published in its books : (*b*) the special features of the Mission vesting all powers of control and guidance in the hands of the monastic body composed of a few senior members (at present 17) and the impossibility of any outsiders entering into the body to influence its methods, its policy and course of action ; (*c*) the constant readiness to offer every facility in every centre of work, temporary or permanent towards official or police inspections, such facilities have already been given on more than one occasion to such responsible police officers as Mr. G. C. Denham and Mr. C. A. Tegart, the latter of whom visited the Headquarters of the Mission at the Belur Math, which was also honoured with a visit by Her

Excellency Lady Minto and which was declared by Mr. Duke afterwards Sir William Duke, then in charge of the District of Howrah, in his judgment in a legal arbitration on 3rd August 1899 as a purely religious institution.

(10) That Your Excellency's memorialists beg to submit that the Ramkrishna Mission is not merely a charitable institution or movement confined to the relief of distress among all men irrespective of race or creed, but it is essentially a *religious* movement, regarding even such work of relief as a kind of religious service. Your Excellency's memorialists may be permitted to cite here the case of the Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service at Benares—which is a branch of the Mission—doing splendid work in giving relief to the sick, the infirm, the aged and the poor and is looked upon by the Local Government as a very useful non-official hospital, and local officials do all in their power to help the institution (*vide* Report for 1914 marked *F*; pp. 7, 11, 19 and 22) and the Government of the U. P. have acquired lands under the Land Acquisition Act for extension of this branch of the Mission.

(11) The said Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service at Benares and similar works started by the Mission at Kankhal, Brindaban, Allahabad and elsewhere are mainly supported by private charities and contributions from members and sympathisers ; Your Excellency's memorialists regret very much to bring to Your Excellency's notice that unfortunately since the Durbar speech—which has generally been construed as an indictment against the Ramkrishna Mission—such active help is in danger of being withdrawn and some of the members are hesitating to continue their membership for fear of unnecessary and groundless harassment and trouble.

(12) With this humble memorial and explanations which Your Excellency's memorialists are prepared to support in detail, they trust and pray that Your Excellency before leaving India, will do the Mission the very great and helpful service—one fully in keeping not only with the spirit of Your Excellency's address, but with that fairness and openness which have animated the whole of Your Excellency's rule and won Your Excellency the united esteem and good-will of the vast body of the community as well as of minorities like the Ramkrishna Mission—of in some way correcting

the disastrous impression of the Mission which has unfortunately arisen since the Durbar speech.

Your Excellency's memorialists will be pleased to answer any questions whether personally or in writing and remain,

Your Excellency's most humble
 The Ramkrishna Math, } and obedient servants,
 Belur, Howrah, } (Sd.) Saradananda
 Dt. 22nd Jan. '17 } Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission
 for the Governing Body.

THE REPLY.

Governor's Camp,
 Bengal
 26th March, 1917.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for having come to see me and for the trouble you have taken to tell me about the origin of the Ramkrishna Mission, and its aims and objects.

I read with great interest the memorial which the Mission authorities submitted to me some time ago. I regret very much to hear that words used by me at the Durbar in December last regarding the Mission should have led in any way to the curtailment of the good religious, social and educational work the Mission has done and is doing. As you I know realize, my object was not to condemn the Ramkrishna Mission and its members. I know the character of the Mission's work is entirely non-political, and I have heard nothing but good of its work of social service for the people. What I wanted to impress upon the people is this: Charitable and philanthropic work such as the Mission undertake is being adopted deliberately by a section of the revolutionary party as a cloak for their own nefarious schemes and in order to attract to their organisations youths who are animated by ideals such as those which actuate the Mission, with the intention of perverting these ideals to their own purposes; and with this object unscrupulous use is being made of the name and reputation of the Ramkrishna Mission.

I have full sympathy with the real aims of the true Ramkrishna Mission and it was this abuse of the name of the Mission that I wish to prevent. I hope the words I used will help the Mission to

guard against the illegitimate use of its name by unscrupulous people.

Yours very sincerely
 (Sd.) Carmichael.

To
 The Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission
 1 Mukherji Lane
 Baghbazar, Calcutta.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANNIVERSARY

AT BELUR MATH.

The 82nd birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at the Math with great *eclat*. About 60 thousand people gathered for the occasion and more than ten thousand people partook of the feast. Many distinguished gentlemen of Bengal attended the festival. It was a day of joy for the Bhaktas and every one was pleased with the splendid arrangements.

AT MADRAS.

The Tithi Puja of the actual 82nd Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna which fell on the 23rd February, was really a day of special worship and prayer. The holy presence of the revered President Maharaj made the occasion still more solemn and enhanced the sanctity of the day.

The day broke with prayers and chanting of the Vedas and culminated in the pouring of oblations into the sacred fire of the Homam which was lit up in the short hours of the next morning. Its conclusion revealed a most elevating spectacle—the giving of Sannyasa Asrama to the chosen Brahmacharins of the math. In the presence of all the Sannyasins the President Maharaj, with his mind rapt in prayer, with a heart full of compassion, with blessings on his lips handed over to each of the chosen Brahmacharins the Kashaya cloth and Danda the emblems of Light and life in the Spirit, the novitiates renouncing all that is earth and earthy in the sacred fire of the Homam.

The public celebration of the birthday was held on the next Sunday the 25th February. From the early hours of the morning the Math grounds presented a scene of animated bustle and activity. A pandal was specially erected for the occasion and a big picture of Sri Ramakrishna was placed on an altar beautifully decorated with ferns and flowers. Various Bhajana parties began to arrive gradually as the morning rolled on towards noon. Over five thousand Daridra Narayanas were fed. Students from various Colleges animated by the spirit of true social service volunteered for feeding the poor. It was a sight to see the poor fed like

this. In the afternoon Mr. M. K. Tatacharyar B. A., of the Public Works Secretariat entertained his big audience with a Harikatha Kalakshepam on "Kaisika Mahatmyam" of absorbing interest. At 5-30 P. M., a public meeting was held in the pandal with Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, C. I. E. in the chair.

The Chairman in his opening remarks said that in India the mind of the youth was confused by two points of view as regards the universe and the life of man in the universe. There was the old Hindu ideal and there was also the modern ideal of the industrial life of England, which was mostly divorced from religion and which was based upon what they considered to be the natural law or the requirements of modern times. The highest development of character was not possible in the absence of religious belief. Sri Ramakrishna emphasised this truth. He also impressed upon the people that Sannyasam did not mean flying away from the world but uncompromising independence towards the world. These truths were recognised in Europe and the more thoughtful minds were rebelling against the material civilisation of the Continent and trying to go back to religion based on morality and principles for the conduct of life. Self-control, concentration and self-conquest were inculcated with great force only in the Hindu religion. All their efforts would be lacking in deeper meaning if they were not correlated to a great spiritual life as a whole. The world of senses and the earthly life were only a stage of preparation for the higher and spiritual world. The philosophical and religious spirit discovered by the great Hindu sages was slowly permeating the West. The great lesson of Sri Ramakrishna was the restatement of the old Sanātana Dharma. He lived amongst men and demonstrated the possibility of obtaining complete control over the senses and concentrating one's mind on the Divine.

Pandit Sriperumbudur Krishnamachariar then addressed the audience in Tamil on the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Next, Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Iyer delivered an eloquent address on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and His contribution to the age. With the usual Mangalarathi and distribution of Prasada the day's proceedings terminated.

—Vedanta Kesari.

AT BANGALORE.

The 82nd Birthday Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated with great devotional eclat in the local branch of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission on Sunday the 25th February 1917. Bhajana parties from various localities of both the City and Cantonment carried in procession excellent photos of the Bhagavan and Sri Swami Vivekananda mounted on richly decorated cars, and arrived at the Mission Premises by 11 A. M. A

special pandal had been erected for the occasion, which was artistically furnished with bunting, festoons, etc. The Bhajana parties treated a big gathering of ladies and gentlemen assembled in the pandal with devotional music. The outstanding feature of the Day commenced from about 12 noon and lasted till 3 P. M. In the spacious grounds of the Sri Anjaneyaswami Temple at Basavangudi, about 2000 poor people were sumptuously fed. Dozens of young men, rich and poor, Brahmana and non-Brahmana alike without any feeling of estrangement between them, served the hungry Narayanas with delicious dishes. At 3 P. M., the Bhagavata gave a sweet Harikatha on "Dhruva Charitra" which was very much appreciated. The Bhagavata was followed by Mr. B. Puttaya, B. A., of the Government Press, with a lucid lecture in Kannada on "The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna." Then Mr. M. G. Varada Char, B. A., B. L., delivered an eloquent address on "The Life of Sri Ramakrishna and its bearing on Modern Religious Thought." He spoke passionately and long with a deep religious fervour. The function terminated with Mangalarathi and distribution of fruits, amid shouts of "Ramakrishna Jai, Vivekananda Jai, Aryavartki jai."

AT BENARES.

The eighty-second Birthday Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Benares, on Sunday, the 25th February last. Sri Ramakrishna's portrait was beautifully decorated with flowers and foliage. About a hundred Sadhus and poor men were fed with Puris etc. Towards the afternoon 'Chandir Gan' took place and was followed by learned and eloquent lectures by Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee, M. A., Ph. D., P. R. S., in English, and Babu Kali Prasanna Chatterjee in Hindi, on the significance of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life and teachings, and their bearings on the modern life of India. Bhajana and distribution of Prasad brought the day's proceedings to a happy termination. About 800 Bhaktas were assembled.

AT KANKHAL.

The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Deb was a great success this year. Many local gentlemen and Mahatmas joined in the celebration which opened with songs and music. Pandit Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, Sankhya, Kavya, Tarka and Vedanta Tirtha delivered a lecture on the "Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Deb." The learned lecture was highly appreciated by the Mahatmas and others. Pandit Swami Keshavanandaji also delivered a very interesting lecture on "Nirvikalpa Samadhi." The Mahatmas and other guests partook of a sumptuous meal and Prasad was distributed amongst the poor Narayanas who had assembled in large numbers.

AT RANGPUR.

Sunday, the 25th February last Rangpur witnessed the unique ceremony of the birthday anniversary of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Dev at the Nawabganj Agricultural Demonstration Farm. The followers and admirers of Sri Ramakrishna Dev as well as the gentry of the town, united with their whole heart to make the occasion a success.

Scarcely the day dawned when a Sankirtan party consisting of a fairly large number of the towns people—young and old—paraded the town. All these people with no reference to either sect or creed were sumptuously fed. A meeting was held at 4 under the presidency of the District Magistrate, Mr. J. N. Gupta, I. C. S., when Babu Mokshada Charan Bhounick M. A., B. L., read an exhaustive essay and Srijit Nitya Gopal Bhattacharjee, Vidyabinode, Lecturer in Sanskrit, Cooch Behar College, spoke on the life and teachings of Sri Sri Paramahamsadev.

The Aratrik began as usual with candle-light, 'Kothakota' and Kirtan went on during the whole evening and a considerable part of the night when the ceremony was over.

AT LUCKNOW.

On the 25th February, the birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was celebrated with great devotion and fervour by the members of the Local Ramakrishna Sevashrama and the public at large. The *Nagar Sankirtan* was out early in the morning to go round the city.

Punctually at 12 noon the main item of the programme—the feeding of the *Daridra Narayana* commenced and lasted till 4-30 P.M. Over 800 were sumptuously fed. The whole affair was saturated with a spirit of humility and devotion. The general meeting of the members and sympathisers was held at 5 P.M. The Hon'ble Pandit Gokaran Nath Misra presided and delivered a sound and appreciative speech, which has already appeared in the Local Press. Prof. U. N. Ball, M. A. and Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer, Editor Lucknow Advocate, spoke on *Sevadharma*. The speech of Mr. Iyer was most opportune and was suited to the occasion. Being an ardent student of the Vedanta and possessing a complete knowledge of the teachings of the Sage of Dakshineswar he succeeded in catering the audience with the right sorts of ideas and ideals. The meeting terminated with the usual vote of thanks to the chair. Then the programme of the day was brought to a close by *Sankirtan* and distribution of *prasada*.

AT CAMBAY.

The eighty-second birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was celebrated by Mr. Narmadashanker Chunilal Pandit at his residence in Hanuman Pole on Friday, the 23rd of February at 8 P.M. Many high officials

of the State, rich gentlemen of the town, and a good many doctors, lawyers, teachers and others attended the meeting in time. The principal item consisted in Harikirtanam and the pious Deccan devotee Hardas Krishna Bua of Baroda entrusted with the sweet duty wonderfully discharged it holding the audience almost spell-bound by his pious personality, exceptional eloquence and rare capacities of creating interest and successfully keeping it up unabated amongst the audience. A short speech explaining the immense value of that ever memorable day delivered by Mr. N. C. Pandit and followed by the distribution of Prasada and Pansupari brought the proceedings to a close. The loud pleasant shouts of "Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Devki jaya" from amongst the large crowd of High School students seated behind the row of beautiful plants added a great deal to the devotional atmosphere already created by the impressive and interesting Kirtana.

AT NAGPUR.

The 82nd birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was celebrated in the temple of Muralidhar at Sangam, Nagpur, on the 25th February last. Pandit Ramprotap Sastri, Professor of Sanskrit of Morris College presided over the function. The important feature of the function was the feeding of the poor at noon who numbered more than 500. In the afternoon the proceedings were opened with a speech in Hindi by the learned President. Then there was *Sankirtan* in Bengali by the members of the local *Harisabha* followed by the chanting of the ever famous *Aratrik* "खंडनभवचंद्रधन जगच्चंद्रन" etc. which were listened to with rapt attention by the assembly. Next spoke Prof. Kali Charan Chatterjee in English about the "Ideal of a Universal Religion" as embodied in the Life and Teachings of the great Saint. Pandit Krishna Sastri Ghule, Professor of the local Veda Sala dwelt on the merits of the renowned Sage in a chaste and beautiful Marhati whilst Babu Anath Nath Das placed at the disposal of the audience the priceless gems of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings in clear and racy Bengali. The learned president then wound up the proceedings by an erudite discourse in Sanskrit. The meeting then terminated with a vote of thanks offered to the chair at about 9 P.M. by Prof. Makham Lal Dey of the Victoria College of Science. The attendance all through was a fairly good one.

On the previous evening there were Marhati Songs and Bhajans.

AT OTHER CENTRES.

The day was observed with Bhajana, prayer and feast in the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati and in many other centres of the Mission and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda Societies such as at Brindaban, Allahabad, Murshidabad, Dehradun, Cooch Behar etc.